

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A combination of piston and piston ring, comprising:
a piston having a piston ring groove in which at least the piston ring groove is made of ~~steel~~ SKD6, SUS305 or SUS630, said piston reciprocally moving in a cylinder bore;
a piston ring made of flake graphite cast ~~iron~~, iron or spheroidal graphite cast iron, ~~white cast iron, malleable cast iron, vermicular graphite cast iron or alloy cast iron~~ having an elastic modulus ranging from 130000 to 170000 MPa, in which at least a lower surface of the piston ring is formed with irregularity on the surface due to an existence of the graphite and the lower surface of the piston ring is and fitted to contact the lower surface of ~~into~~ the piston ring groove; and
a hard coat film formed to at least an outer peripheral sliding surface of the piston ring.

Claims 2-3. (Cancelled)

4. (Original) A combination of piston and piston ring according to claim 1, wherein said hard coat film is an ion-plating film.
5. (Original) A combination of piston and piston ring according to claim 1, wherein said piston ring is subjected to a nitriding treatment.
6. (Previously presented) A combination of piston and piston ring according to claim 1 wherein said combination of piston and piston ring is a combination of piston and piston ring for an internal combustion engine.

7. (Previously presented) A combination of piston and piston ring according to claim 6 wherein said internal combustion engine is a diesel engine.

8. (Previously presented) A combination of piston and piston ring according to claim 4 wherein said combination of piston and piston ring is a combination of piston and piston ring for an internal combustion engine.

9. (Previously presented) A combination of piston and piston ring according to claim 8 wherein said internal combustion engine is a diesel engine.

10. (Previously presented) A combination of piston and piston ring according to claim 5 wherein said combination of piston and piston ring is a combination of piston and piston ring for an internal combustion engine.

11. (Previously presented) A combination of piston and piston ring according to claim 10 wherein said internal combustion engine is a diesel engine.

Claim 12. (Canceled).

13. (Currently amended) A method for reducing the tendency of a piston ring to adhere to a steel piston ring groove made of SKD6, SUS305 or SUS630 in a reciprocating piston of an internal combustion engine, said method comprising:

applying a hard coat film to at least an outer peripheral sliding surface of a cast iron piston ring made of flake graphite cast iron or spheroidal graphite cast iron, having an elastic modulus ranging from 130000 to 170000 MPa, in which at least a lower surface of the piston ring is formed with irregularity on the surface due to an existence of the graphite; and

fitting said surface-coated cast iron piston ring into said steel piston ring groove so that said lower surface is fitted to contact the lower surface of the piston ring groove.

14. (New) A combination of piston and piston ring according to claim 1 wherein the hard coat film is limited to said outer peripheral sliding surface.

15. (New) A method as in claim 13 wherein the hard coat film is limited to said outer peripheral sliding surface.